



On Wednesday, Dec. 7th, the 5th grade class at the East Belfast Elementary School were doing jumping-jacks! No, it wasn't part of their physical fitness class, they had begun the annual project to raise food and funds for the Greater Bay Area Ministerium's Food Cupboard. Around this time of year, for each of the past 10 years or possibly more, the 5th graders in Mrs. Lynn Hoenig's class find different ways of raising money. They bring in their own donations and receive them from school teachers and staff, they collect toys and gifts to be sold at a Holiday Bazaar for the other students at their school, and they receive donations from others outside the school. And with every dollar received, they all do a jumping-jack, a sit-up or a push-up! And so, this week, after the regular morning session with all the students, and a special visit from Rev. Joel Krueger of The First Church in Belfast, UCC, and Rev. Jinwoo Chun of Belfast United Methodist Church, Cindy Frost from the GBAM Food Cupboard Board, and John Arrison, the Food Cupboard Board's Treasurer, they accepted their first donations and started doing their jumping-jacks!

Treasurer John Arrison told the students Wednesday, that other than the churches involved with the GBAM Food Cupboard, that their school is the Food Cupboard's single biggest contributor! Records going back as far as 2006 show that in the past 10 years, East Belfast Elem. has given \$7,682.08 (and that is without figures included for 2010) ('06: \$401.89; '07: \$733.33; '08: \$1,014.00; '09: \$934.14; '10: ?; '11: \$875.29; '12: \$571.55; '13: \$760.00; '14: \$774.85; '15: \$1,616.63).

The Greater Bay Area Ministerium Food Cupboard, is located at the Belfast United Methodist Church at 23 Mill Lane, and serves families every other Friday morning (this month it will be open Dec. 16th and 30th, 9:00-11:30 am). During those weeks, volunteers from 7 of the ministerium's churches, Belfast United Methodist Church, the Belfast Area Friends Meeting, First Baptist Church, The First Church UCC, St. Francis Catholic Church, St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, and the Unitarian Universalist Church, pack 200 bags of groceries to be dispersed to over 150 families. They are just one of a number of food pantries in the area who serve the 15.5% of the population in Waldo County who are food insecure, a total of about 6,000 people. Maine itself, has a rate of 16.2% food insecurity, with 24% of our children, nearly 1 in every 4, with insufficient food resources for their daily needs (*from Good Shepherd Food Bank website: www.gsfb/hunger/*). Maine has the highest rate of food insecurity in all of New England. So, the need is very real around us. If you are interested in donating to the 5th grade classes' fund raiser, you can make a check out to "East Belfast School" with "Food Cupboard" in the memo line. Also, donations of new or lightly used small gift items like books and small toys and other items will be accepted for their Holiday Bazaar through Thursday, Dec. 15th. For more information, please call the school at 338-4420. The Food Cupboard and the people it serves have benefited greatly from the work and generosity of Mrs. Hoenig's classes. During this coming Christmas season when the attributes of generosity and giving come most eagerly upon us, may we all be moved to remember those less fortunate than ourselves. May God bless us all!